

USDOL Maps Course for WIA Reauthorization

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As part of the rollout of the Bush Administration's FY 2004 budget request, the Employment and Training Administration distributed a document that laid out some of the key legislative proposals likely to make their way into the new WIA legislation up for reauthorization on Oct. 1, 2003.

This document states that the reauthorization "proposal will continue to transform and integrate the One-Stop Career Center delivery system into a coherent workforce investment system that can respond quickly and effectively to the changing needs of business and the new economy...and partner and connect with the private sector and with post-secondary education and training, social services, and economic development systems to prepare the 21st century workforce for career opportunities and skills in high growth sectors."

The key elements of the proposal include:

1. **Streamline the membership requirements of the State Workforce Investment Board** to include One-Stop partners with an "increased voice and authority to formulate policies and priorities governing the One-Stop Career Center system." The board chair would continue to be from the private sector but the business majority would no longer be required. Governors would have the authority to add additional members, such as more business reps.
2. **Reconfigure the membership and functions of the Local Workforce Investment Boards** to ensure geographic representation as well as representation from the leading industry sectors. One-Stop partner officials would not be required members of local boards, but could be appointed to a "management council" by the local board chair. This streamlined membership would "provide an increased voice for business representatives, community groups and worker advocates; therefore, enabling Boards to be more responsive to local needs."
3. **Youth Councils should no longer be required;** however, "Governors and chief elected officials should retain the authority to create or continue youth councils if it is believed that Youth Councils add value in their states or local areas."
4. **Reduce planning cycle and submission of state and local plans** from five years to two years.
5. **Create a new way to fund the cost of the One-Stop system infrastructure** in order to alleviate many of the current local negotiation issues and allow local areas to focus on meeting the needs of businesses and workers.
6. **Encourage One-Stop Career Centers to provide a wide range of services for low-wage workers** that would enhance career advancement opportunities.

7. **Remove barriers to serving target populations**, such as individuals with disabilities, migrant and seasonal farm workers, and older workers. By eliminating such barriers, the “system would become more dynamic and flexible while maintaining a universal focus.”
8. **Combine WIA Adult, WIA Dislocated Worker and Wagner-Peyser funding streams** into a single formula program “resulting in streamlined program administration and the reduction of current duplication and inefficiency.”
9. **Flexibility in the delivery of core, intensive and training services** that would allow for the provision of services to individuals that would meet their unique needs.
10. **Provide governors the authority to determine what standards, information and data would be required for the eligible training providers list.** “Such authority would result in an improved eligible training provider system and ensure the continuation of such key ideas as customer choice and provider accountability while making it easier for training providers to participate in the system.”
11. **Transform Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) into Career Scholarships**, a flexible and portable account that could be used by unemployed and certain groups of employed workers, for training services and other life-long learning opportunities.
12. **Establish authority to create Personal Reemployment Accounts** – special self-managed accounts for use by individuals who are out of work and who have been identified as very likely to exhaust their unemployment benefits.
13. **Merge unexpended Welfare-to-Work grant funds into WIA** and provide services through the One-Stops.
14. **Focus youth funds on serving at-risk youth** – specifically school dropouts, court-involved youth and foster care youth transitioning into society.
15. **Reduce the number of performance indicators from 17 to eight** (4 for youth and 4 for adults). The eight indicators are currently being developed by the federal partner agencies as part of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) common measures initiative for employment and job training programs.
16. **Develop a less rigid, more dynamic performance negotiation process** “designed to take into account local labor market needs and the characteristics of individuals being served.”